

Honorable Ronald B. Leighton

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT TACOMA

DANIEL MITCHELL, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

CHARLES ATKINS, et al.,

Defendants,

and

SAFE SCHOOLS SAFE COMMUNITIES,

Intervenor-Defendant.

No. 3:19-cv-05106 RBL

DECLARATION OF APRIL
SCHENTRUP IN SUPPORT OF
DEFENDANTS' AND INTERVENOR-
DEFENDANT'S CROSS-MOTION FOR
SUMMARY JUDGMENT AND
OPPOSITION TO PLAINTIFFS'
MOTION FOR SUMMARY
JUDGMENT

1 I, April Schentrup, declare as follows:

- 2 1. I am over the age of 18, competent to testify as to the matters herein, and make this
3 declaration based on my personal knowledge.
- 4 2. I currently reside in Bellevue, Washington. I am a Field Supervisor for the Seattle Pacific
5 University College of Education, a job in which I oversee teacher internships.
- 6 3. Prior to living in Bellevue, I lived and worked in Florida, where I was an elementary
7 school teacher, assistant principal, and principal for over 20 years. I also briefly served as
8 the Director of School Safety and Security for Broward County Public Schools.
- 9 4. I am the mother of three children. I also have the unfortunate distinction of having to
10 endure one of the most heart-wrenching and traumatic experiences a parent can go
11 through: the entirely preventable loss of a child. My daughter, Carmen, was shot multiple
12 times and killed by a 19-year old who used a legally purchased semiautomatic assault
13 rifle to carry out a mass shooting at her school.
- 14 5. In February 2018, my two daughters Carmen and Evelyn were students at Marjory
15 Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida ("MSD"). At the time, Carmen was
16 a senior and Evelyn was a freshman.
- 17 6. Carmen was an exceptionally bright, motivated and caring teenager. Although she was a
18 senior in high school, she was only 16 years old. She completed two grade levels in one
19 year in elementary school, allowing her to skip a grade. She was taking six or seven AP
20 classes her senior year and was a National Merit Scholar.
- 21 7. Carmen could do anything she set her mind to and liked to challenge herself. She played
22 violin, piano, and guitar and would learn songs on her own. At one point, she decided it
23 would be interesting to live in Germany, so she created a PowerPoint presentation for our
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1 family to convince us to visit the country. She learned German on her own and then
2 served as tour guide for our family during the trip. And after our family left, Carmen
3 stayed longer with family friends to further her language skills. Carmen continued this
4 passion by signing herself up for a German class at nearby Broward College, which she
5 took on top of her full high school schedule her senior year.
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7 8. Carmen constantly looked for ways to be involved and improve the world. She served as
8 President of our church's youth group. At MSD, she was President of the acapella club, a
9 member of the Gay/Straight Alliance to support her LGBTQ friends, and active in the
10 Health Occupation Students of America.

11 9. Carmen's interest in health-related careers was based on her plan to become a medical
12 researcher and find a cure for ALS. One of her aunts had died of ALS and Carmen
13 wanted to make a difference for other families affected by the disease.
14

15 10. Carmen was planning to study pre-med in undergrad. She selected schools based on their
16 medical research capabilities. She recently learned that she had been accepted into the
17 University of Florida. Her acceptance to the University of Washington arrived shortly
18 after she was killed.

19 11. Carmen also was, in many ways, a typical teenager. She loved being with her friends,
20 riding horses, and the independence that comes with starting to drive.
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22 12. Perhaps most importantly, Carmen was funny, helpful, and loving to her family and
23 friends. She had incredible gifts to contribute and the motivation and excitement to do so.

24 13. On the morning of February 14, 2018, I got up as normal to get ready for work at my job
25 as the Principal of Pembroke Pines Elementary School. I had made Valentine's Day
26 goody bags for my girls. I put them on the counter and knocked on their doors to let them
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1 know I was going to work. I said to them through the doors: "Happy Valentine's Day.
2 Love you. Have a great day at school." But I didn't see them before I left for work.

3 14. The day was proceeding as normal until about 2:30pm. Around that time, I received a
4 text from my youngest daughter, Evelyn, which read: "I'm safe." I did not know what
5 was going on, so I asked: "Where are you?"

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7 15. Soon after, a friend of mine who also worked in the Parkland schools called my school
8 and informed me that there was a lockdown at MSD. This was the first I heard of a
9 lockdown, but I still did not know what was going on.

10 16. I then called a friend who let me know there were reports of a school shooting.

11 17. I texted Evelyn back and then texted Carmen to find out where she was and what was
12 going on. Evelyn responded that she had been evacuated from the school and was at the
13 Wal-Mart near the school. I called my husband to update him and he went to the Wal-
14 Mart to pick up Evelyn.

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16 18. I had not heard back from Carmen yet so I attempted to go to the school to try to find her.
17 I could not reach the school due to the police activity. I went to a nearby park to wait.

18 19. At the park, I contacted people I knew at the school and texted Carmen's friends to see if
19 they knew anything. Carmen's friends texted back and said they heard that Carmen was
20 injured and maybe taken in an ambulance.

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22 20. I then contacted the Sheriff's office and all of our local hospitals. Many would not share
23 any information, so I drove to the hospitals to see if Carmen was there.

24 21. One of the hospitals said they did not have Carmen listed, but they did have some female
25 students that may fit her description. I gave them a picture of Carmen and the hospital
26 staff said they would look around.

1 22. A chaplain and a police officer then came over to talk with me. In talking with them, the
2 gravity of the situation dawned on me for the first time. Up until that point, I had not
3 understood the scope of the tragedy; that this was a mass shooting with several people
4 injured and killed.

5 23. The hospital staff then returned and let me know that Carmen was not there. I learned that
6 all family members looking for their children were to go to the nearby Marriott hotel.
7 Around 6:00pm, the chaplain drove me to the Marriott.
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9 24. The scene at the Marriott was chaotic. There was a table of police officers asking for the
10 names of people for whom families were searching. The police officers did not have
11 Carmen's name on their list and did not know where she was. I saw one of Carmen's
12 teachers and asked if she knew anything. She told me that Carmen was in Ms. Reoven's
13 AP Psychology class at the time of the shooting and that Ms. Reoven was at the Marriott
14 being interviewed by the police.
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16 25. I asked the police if I could speak with Ms. Reoven, because I still was under the
17 impression that Carmen was injured. But I did not know whether that meant she had been
18 shot, had a fall, or something else. I was not able to speak with Ms. Reoven.
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20 26. The police eventually separated us into different groups. I was put in a group of people
21 where the police asked us for our loved ones' full names, birthdates, description of what
22 they were wearing, and recent pictures. At that moment, I had a really bad gut feeling. I
23 called my brother-in-law, who works in the Gainesville, Florida police department, and
24 asked him what that meant. He said if that if I was being asked those questions then
25 Carmen likely had been killed.

26 27. Our family had put out pleas for information on social media. Around 10:30pm, an older
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1 sister of one of Carmen's classmates called me. She said her sister could not speak, but
2 that the gunman had shot into Carmen's classroom and that Carmen was one of the
3 students who had been shot. She then told me that later, when the police evacuated the
4 class, Carmen remained in the classroom. When I heard this I knew my worst nightmare
5 had come true: Carmen was gone.
6

7 28. Around midnight, the FBI said they would start calling individual families. At about
8 2:00am, the FBI called me in and told me that Carmen was one of the deceased. She had
9 been fatally shot in the classroom.

10 29. I then went home and had to tell my other children that our Carmen, with whom we so
11 recently had been talking and laughing, had been killed.

12 30. Carmen was killed in a mass shooting carried out by Nikolas Cruz, a 19-year old former
13 MSD student. He used a single firearm in the attack: a Smith and Wesson MP-15 with
14 eight 30- and 40-round capacity magazines. Cruz legally purchased this AR-15 style
15 semiautomatic assault rifle from a gun shop the year before, when he was 18.
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17 31. Cruz used this single semiautomatic assault rifle to fire over a hundred rounds of
18 ammunition in a short time. The state of Florida created the Marjory Stoneman Douglas
19 High School Public Safety Commission to investigate and document the details and
20 timeline of the shooting. The Commission reports and to-the-second timelines are
21 publicly available at <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/CommissionReport.pdf> and
22 <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/MSD-Report-2-Public-Version.pdf>.
23

24 32. Cruz did not enter a single classroom during the shooting. Instead, he used his
25 semiautomatic assault rifle to gun down students and staff in the hallways and by
26 shooting through windows in the classroom doors. Carmen's classroom was the third
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1 room Cruz shot into. Carmen's teacher had gathered the students in a "safe corner" in her
2 classroom. But not all the students could fit in the corner. Carmen and three other
3 students were left on the edge. Cruz shot these four students, injuring three of them and
4 killing Carmen. Carmen was struck by four bullets, including a fatal shot to the back of
5 her head. Her friend next to her was shot three times. The other two students were shot in
6 the knee and the arm. Cruz was at Carmen's classroom door for no more than 9 seconds
7 before he continued on his killing spree.
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9 33. It took less than two minutes for Cruz to unpack his semiautomatic assault rifle, load his
10 magazines, and open fire on the first floor at MSD before moving to the next floor. In
11 around 120 seconds he shot 24 students and staff, killing 11, including Carmen, and
12 injuring 13. In total, Cruz used his single semiautomatic assault rifle to kill 17 people and
13 injure 17 others throughout MSD in a matter of minutes.
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15 34. I cannot put into adequate words how the loss of Carmen has impacted my and my
16 family's life. On the morning of February 14, 2018, I was happy and had what I
17 considered a great life: three amazing children, a great husband, a job I loved. I felt
18 complete.
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20 35. Now, my life is defined as before and after Carmen's death. I feel broken and like I have
21 a hole inside that cannot be filled. I cannot answer simple questions people, like: "Do you
22 have children?" and "How old are your kids?"
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24 36. I am sad every day thinking about how Carmen is no longer here. I miss her. I miss her
25 silly jokes. Her playing the piano. Her little conversations about how she is thinking. Her
26 thoughts about how to make the world a better place. My world is incomplete without
27 her. I want to remember the happy memories. But every time I do, it comes with the

1 sadness of knowing that there are no future memories to make with Carmen.

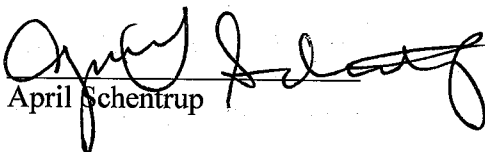
2 37. I also think about the dreams she had and how those will not be fulfilled now. Her dream
3 of curing ALS. Her plan to adopt children when she was older. I think of what she would
4 be doing now, who she would be dating, and how her life would be as we grow older. But
5 those dreams and those thoughts have all been taken from me, and more importantly from
6 Carmen.
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8 38. At family get-togethers it is obvious that Carmen is not there. Her absence is clear. But as
9 a family it is more painful to talk about it, so now we don't. As her siblings and extended
10 family attempt to continue on with their lives it is obvious that they have been scarred.
11 The trauma of losing our Carmen in such a violent, senseless, and sudden manner is
12 something that will stay with us forever.
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14 39. Words are not enough to express how my and my family's lives have been devastated by
15 this act of gun violence. Our Carmen is gone. An obviously troubled teenager decided to
16 use his legally purchased semiautomatic assault rifle to commit one of the worst, but
17 sadly not the only, school shootings in our nation's history. As a result, Carmen is no
18 longer a bright shining star in this world and my life will never be the same.
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20 I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.
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23 SIGNED this 6 day of March, 2020, at Bellevue, Washington.

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26 April Schentrup
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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 5th day of March, 2020, I electronically filed the foregoing document with the Clerk of the United States District Court using the CM/ECF system which will send notification of such filing to all parties who are registered with the CM/ECF system.

DATED this _____ day of March, 2020.
